

THE
HUMAN
SIDE
of
HUGHES

Charles Evans Hughes, Jr., a "rookie" at Plattsburg, receives word of his father's nomination.

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I HOPE if an autopsy is ever performed on me you will find something besides sawdust and useful information."

This remark is not to be found among the collected speeches of Charles E. Hughes. It was made in the smoking room of a special train at the end of a day's campaigning in the autumn of 1908, when the Governor was telling the voters why he should be sent back to Albany for another term. In various forms it has been repeated in other quiet talks with friends from that time to this. To one newspaper man who sought information for a biographical sketch from the then Governor he gave but one suggestion as to how the material should be handled.

"If you can do so conscientiously," he said, "try in what you write to do something to disabuse the public mind of the impression that I am a sort of austere blue stocking person without any red blood or bowels of mercy, that I am a mere coldly calculating interrogation point."

For if there is anything that this serene, even tempered, kindly sympathetic man resents it is the popular notion, whose prevalence is perhaps not as wide as it was once, that he is temperamentally all Puritan, intellectually a dweller on some cold, remote peak, a monkish recluse, unemotional, forbidding, inaccessible, the epitome of austerity. He knows this is a false picture. His friends know it is false and presently the people, as he goes among them, will know the falsity as they awake to the fact that Mr. Hughes, in addition to his other attractive qualities, is a human being in a nation of a hundred million other more or less human beings.

The Hughes myth, the delusion as to the frigid pedantry of this man, is a creation of politics. It was carefully erected by the politicians whose will he crossed in those days from 1894 to 1910 when he was Governor of New York. Some who didn't appreciate the truth and some who did joined for their own purposes in spreading the fable in the hope that the voters would accept this judgment rather than the evidence of their own senses. It is a serious thing for a man in public life to be pictured as Mr. Hughes has been. He had to overcome the handicap when he was Governor, he will have to do it again as he seeks election to the Presidency.

New York knows him. The Hughes myth is probably permanently disabused in his home State. But there is no doubt about its present persistence among thousands of men in other parts of the country. A remark often heard by those who attended the Chicago Republican convention was this: "Hughes? A great man, a great intellect, but he hasn't got the stuff that appeals to the ordinary voter. He's just a thinking machine."

Go up to the Hotel Astor, walk down a second floor corridor and look through a wide open door into a room where Candidate Hughes has been greeting old friends and making new ones since Monday. Then pass among the men gathered in other rooms of the hotel and you will find out whether or not they believe he is "just a thinking machine."

Ask Charles Farnham, who managed his tours when he was Governor; ask Robert Fuller, who was the Governor's secretary; ask Brown University classmates who are dropping in on their way to commencement reunions; ask anybody that counts Charles E. Hughes as a personal friend or has talked with him for more than two minutes. Yes, even ask the politicians who played together the Hughes myth eight and ten years ago and see what they think about it now.

A New reporter did this. The first person he encountered was one who

travelled about the State with the Governor a great deal in the days when Hughes was appealing to the people against the obnoxious of a hostile Legislature.

"I'm a poor hand at anecdotes," this man said, "and the only thing that occurs to me now is too trifling for your use. But it's the truth that I never think of Mr. Hughes without being reminded of Governor's day at the Syracuse State fair."

"He was walking through the exhibits, wearing a high hat and escorted by a citizens' committee similarly disguised, and by his military staff in uniform. It was a solemn, important occasion—for the committee. As they were passing the poultry show a big buff Cochin rooster suddenly flapped his wings, reared his head and let out a mighty crow. None of the escort

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Mrs. Hughes in her home.

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Miss Elizabeth Hughes, playing with her best loved pet.

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dared to smile. But the Governor doffed his tie, made an elaborate bow to the rooster and said:

"I can't pass by without acknowledging such a salute as that."

"So the whole party followed the Governor's example and everybody was quite human for the rest of the day. You may not know it, but Mr. Hughes abhors formality except when the occasion absolutely demands it."

Another in the reminiscing group at the Astor headquarters was a well known New York lawyer. He spoke up:

"I never heard of the rooster story, but I do remember something that throws light on a phase of Mr. Hughes' character that no one would ever hear about from him. Many years ago before the gas and insurance investigations I was retained by a man whose wife was being sued in connection with a matter concerning an organization of women. I was rather young and my client thought I ought to have counsel to aid me.

"So I called up a friend and asked him to recommend the best trial counsel in New York city. He replied, 'You want Charles E. Hughes.' I had never heard of Charles E. Hughes, but on my friend's advice I called on him. He heard my story, took the case and fought it successfully through the Court of Appeals. He presented no bill until I asked for one, and then it was ridiculously small. I said to him: 'Why, Mr. Hughes, this doesn't begin to pay you for your time.'"

"He replied, 'Mr. —, I took this case on your representation of the situation and am glad to have been of service. This man (our client) has given his life to helping the poor and that is all I am going to charge.'"

"And he wouldn't take a cent more than the nominal fee he had fixed."

There are many stories illustrating the candidate's ability to meet campaign interruptions with a quick and humorous retort, an invaluable asset to a platform speaker. For example, in 1908 his Democratic opponent for

the Governorship, Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler, said in one of his drives that Mr. Hughes was a "modern Oliver Cromwell." Mr. Hughes was speaking in an up-State city on the following day when a man in the crowd shouted, "How about Oliver Cromwell?"

"That reminds me," the Governor



Miss Helen Hughes, the candidate's eldest daughter.

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Mr. Hughes at the Flag Day exercises of the National Cathedral School for Girls.

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found in an appreciation written by President Faunce of Brown University several years ago. Speaking of Hughes the undergraduate Dr. Faunce said:

"He had a touch of that highbrowism which among students is so frequently the mask of profound moral seriousness. He never hurt himself with overstudy. His desk was piled high with works of fiction, for his curious and restless mind was reaching out into sympathetic relations with all sorts and conditions of men. A better story teller or a more whole-souled companion on a journey it would be hard to find."

Mr. Hughes still reads fiction, still keeps abreast of the best in modern literature, still repeats the sayings of Mr. Dooley with a tongue that would win approval even from Emily Peter

the good old fashioned detective story as a panacea for a weary brain and a tired back."

He was immensely amused by a magazine sketch portraying him as starting an Alpine tramp with "a volume of Kant's philosophy, a treatise on solid geometry and 'Lycurgus.'" He pleaded guilty to a fondness for Kant, repudiated the solid geometry, and as for Lycurgus he said, "I don't know what that may be, but I hope it's nothing intoxicating."

One night in the last session of an especially hard-fisted Legislature a visitor went in to see the Governor expecting to find him bowed down with the weight of the conflict and burning the midnight oil over refractory bulletins from the Capitol. But Mr. Hughes came forward with a finger marking a place in a book that he held.

"Good evening, Mr. Blank," he said. "I have read six novels of Dumas since the session began and if it keeps up much longer I'll have to begin on Gaboriau."

Mr. Hughes's whiskers may worry art critics and provide bread for the cartoonists, but there is no evidence that they have ever distressed him for a moment.

The original reason for Mr. Hughes's beard, which, by the way, has been noticeably reduced in dimensions in the course of his residence in Washington, is to be found in his first days as a teacher. Being graduated from Brown University at the age of 19 he found his boyish appearance so serious a problem that he adopted the expedient of submitting in writing his applications for employment as a teacher. In this way he was engaged to teach Greek and mathematics at Delhi, N. Y. He is fond of telling how amazed Prof. James O. Griffin, now of the Stanford University faculty, was when he presented himself at Delhi.

"My dear young man," said Dr. Griffin to the stripling, "I cannot doubt your competency to teach the branches for which you have been engaged. But how, pray, do you expect to rule the young men who will come under your charge? You have no more beard than an egg and I fear you lack the physique that is sometimes necessary to maintain discipline among effervescent souls."

So the young schoolmaster did his best to rectify the error of juvenility and since then he has been no reason for effacing the beard that sprang to his assistance then.

One more story: Looking up from his desk at Albany one afternoon (day, Hughes found at his side a man he had never seen before. He was surprised that Col. Treadwell, his military secretary, had not introduced the visitor, but he put out his hand and said heartily, "How are you?"

"Just got out of jail," said the stranger.

"What were you in for?"

"For the second time for trying to escape."

"Were you guilty?"

"Yes."

"What were you in for the first time?"

"Burglary, twelve years."

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